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# In Common

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Ontario

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## Expanding the Range of Assessment Methods

Implementing *The Common Curriculum, Grades 1-9* requires the use of a broad range of assessment techniques. What has been learned in the past two decades about students' learning styles, different kinds of intelligence,<sup>1</sup> and special learning needs indicates that limiting assessment to what people can remember or produce in a timed test or examination does not always provide good data about actual performance in life and work. In addition, traditional paper-and-pencil tests or examinations cannot measure many of the most critical things we want students to be able to do when they graduate.

Various other methods of assessment and evaluation must be not only used regularly but used in conjunction with instruction to ensure that *all* students attain high levels of knowledge, gain the necessary intellectual and interpersonal skills, and are able to act from a set of positive values.

There are other reasons why a wide variety of assessment and evaluation methods must be used. Life in the twenty-first century will require people to solve complex problems in their families and communities and in the workplace. Often these tasks will have to be completed in consultation with

others. Skills lists such as the one produced in 1992 by the Conference Board of Canada confirm this.<sup>2</sup> If report cards and marks are to have meaning for the future, they must measure achievement of results on complex tasks and in actual performance, not just the acquisition of knowledge and theory.

Selection of employees in all types of work is now done using a wide range of assessment methods.

Potential employees are often required to submit well-written résumés, to bring samples of their work (e.g., portfolios), to do written and performance tests, to work under observation with others, to perform well in an interview, and to demonstrate a high level of interpersonal and social skills.

Many universities, colleges,

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## What to Watch For

Here are some resources that have recently become available, or will soon be available, and that may assist you in implementing *The Common Curriculum, Grades 1-9*.

### Provincial Standards Project

The ministry is developing provincial standards (formerly called benchmarks) in mathematics and language to assist teachers in the assessment of student progress at the end of Grades 3, 6, and 9. These standards have been developed by the ministry and its education partners, which include the Ontario Teachers' Federation, other professional associations (e.g., language teachers' associa-

tions, Primary/Junior educator associations), and classroom teachers.

It is expected that the mathematics standards document will be distributed in the near future. The language standards documents for English and Français will also be distributed soon and will be available for comment.

### Electronic Versions of *The Common Curriculum, Grades 1-9*

The ministry has developed and made available the following electronic versions of *The Common*

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*In Common* is a newsletter produced by the Ministry of Education and Training to communicate information about the implementation of *The Common Curriculum, Grades 1-9* and to encourage feedback from schools and their communities. Such feedback will be used to revise the document and make it more responsive to the needs of the communities in which it is used. *In Common* will be produced approximately every two months.

Cette publication est également offerte en français sous le titre suivant : *En commun*.

## Expanding ... (continued from front page)

and technical and professional certification programs are using the same kinds of assessment methods to select potential candidates. In addition, they are incorporating a broader range of assessment techniques into their own programs.

In elementary and secondary schools, assessment methods should vary with grade and subject material, although a broad range of techniques should be used in all programs. The focus must be on exactly what the student has achieved in relation to the outcomes and on how that achievement has been demonstrated. Sample assessment methods are listed below:

portfolio	paper-and-pencil test
journal	teacher observation
multiple-choice test	demonstration
videotape or audiotape	story telling
recording	construction project
essay	role play/dramatization
invention	community project
individual report	formulation of a
group project	problem
oral presentation	experiment
student-profile sheet	story writing
game	photo essay
graph/table/database	art work
co-operative activity	problem solving
conference	survey
individual research	formal examination
project	interview
musical composition	dance composition

### Teacher Observation of Student Work

Changes in assessment cannot occur in isolation from instruction. The work that has been done in the province over the past two decades in co-operative learning, teaching the process of writing, and activity-based learning must be incorporated into instruction in order to help students achieve the outcomes stated in *The Common Curriculum*. In classrooms where students take responsibility for their learning and where they are involved in the production of materials, teacher observation and recording can become an increasingly important part of assessment.

For many teachers, in-service education and practice will be required to enable them to observe students on a day-to-day basis while other students are working.

### Self-Evaluation and Peer Evaluation

Ensuring that students learn to evaluate their own work and that of their peers is perhaps the most critical part of assessment. If teachers can effectively develop students' skills in assessing and correcting their own work and in setting out plans for a project and assessing and revising these plans each day, then some of the major requirements for effective lifelong learning and success in the workplace will have been achieved. Equally important are skills in assessing the work of a partner or colleague and giving feedback that can be used by the other person to revise and improve his or her work.

In the past, these skills were not often taught in a systematic way, and most adults, including teachers, have therefore had to develop them on their own. Sample assessment sheets for assessing both product and procedure are available in many school board curriculum documents and in commercial materials.

### Rubrics

Rubrics are "score sheets" that indicate how a project, performance, or answer to a complex problem will be marked. A rubric takes into account all aspects of the work, which often include both the process and the product. It is usually devised by a group of people who need to use it to mark a large number of items accurately and fairly. Often in a complex problem, unanticipated solutions will require revisions to the rubric while the marking is being done. This type of scoring device is most useful when it is developed with the students, before and during the completion of the task. It allows students to see

## Working Committee Meets

The working committee to review the responses that the ministry is receiving to *The Common Curriculum, Grades 1-9* held its first meeting on October 25 and 26, 1993. The following individuals are the members of this committee:

#### Pierre Boutin

Association des agentes et agents de supervision franco-ontariens

#### Jan Cornwall

Federation of Women Teachers' Associations of Ontario

#### Carol Corsetti

Ontario Teachers' Federation

#### Lorna Earl

Board of Education for the City of Scarborough

#### Jackie Foerter

Ontario Public School Teachers' Federation

#### Janet J. Glasspool

Ontario Public Supervisory Officers' Association

#### Laurent Joncas

Association des enseignantes et des enseignants franco-ontariens

#### Ginette Plourde

Ministry of Education and Training

#### Ilze Purmalis

Ministry of Education and Training

#### Cate Roberts

Ontario Secondary School

Teachers' Federation

#### Phil Rocco

Ontario Catholic Supervisory Officers' Association

#### Gail Stelter

Ontario English Catholic

Teachers' Association

#### Ron Wideman

Ministry of Education and Training

#### Doug Wrigglesworth

Ontario Teachers' Federation

exactly where their work was effective and what was missing or poorly done. Most importantly, it allows students to compare their work against a predetermined high standard, not just against other students' work.

### Evaluation and Reporting

In order to record the results of a broad range of assessments, it is necessary to have "tracking" sheets for each student. Many Kindergarten and Primary teachers are already familiar with methods and procedures for recording these results; other teachers will need to learn them. The data that are collected from the variety of assessments for each student will be used to evaluate the student's overall work. Teachers will evaluate each student's achievement in relation to the learning outcomes or in relation to the actual standards of achievement, where available. The involvement of both the students and the parents is critical throughout the year and at the time when decisions about the next year's placements are being made.

1. See, for example, Howard Gardner, *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences* (New York: Basic Books, [1983]).

2. See the brochure entitled *Employability Skills Profile*. Most school boards have received copies of this brochure from the Conference Board of Canada. If you would like a copy and cannot obtain one from your school board, please write to the Conference Board of Canada, 255 Smyth Road, Ottawa, Ontario K1H 8M7.

**Q.** Why is *The Common Curriculum, Grades 1-9* called a working document?

**A.** The term "working document" signals a more dynamic approach to curriculum development, implementation, and review. To prepare students for life in a rapidly changing world, schools need a curriculum that is regularly updated. It may be helpful to think of the February 1993 version of *The Common Curriculum* in computer software terms as version 1.0. While it is being implemented, it will be revised on the basis of comments received from educators and the public. The next version, which might be thought of as version 2.0, is expected to be ready in December 1994.

## A Word From the Lincoln County Board

Implementing *The Common Curriculum, Grades 1-9* has implications for school organization and activities, including the grouping of students, evaluation, and reporting to parents. A central concern in the Lincoln County Board has been to establish close communication among all concerned so that necessary changes can be accomplished effectively.

One priority has been to assist educators and the public to become familiar with the content of *The Common Curriculum, Grades 1-9*. Administrators were

asked to develop workshop strategies for this purpose. Different strategies were developed for small and large groups of parents, teaching staff of small and large schools, department heads, elementary and secondary school staff, and community groups other than parents.

When prepared, the strategies were distributed to schools. Schools have been asked to use the strategies and suggest how they can be improved. From time to time updated versions will be produced.

## Please Participate

in the process of revising and strengthening *The Common Curriculum*

The Ministry of Education and Training is looking forward to receiving suggestions related to *The Common Curriculum*. These will assist in the preparation of an updated version of the curriculum, which is expected to be released in December 1994.

It is essential that *The Common Curriculum* effectively support the implementation of outcomes-based education, integrated programming, and destreaming.

The review and analysis of all the feedback that is received is being conducted by a working committee that includes seven teachers named by the Ontario Teachers' Federation, three supervisory officers named by the supervisory officers' associations, and three representatives of the Ministry of Education and Training. Research expertise and leadership is being provided by Dr. Lorna Earl, Research Director at the Board of Education for the City of Scarborough.

Please respond to the following key questions for each of the four parts of the document:

- What is valuable about *The Common Curriculum*? (Please give reasons for your views.)
- What needs to be clarified? (Please suggest ways in which the things you have identified could be clarified.)
- What needs to be changed? (Please provide suggestions for changes.)
- What needs to be added?

Please submit your or your group's views and suggestions to:

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## What to Watch For ... (continued from front page)

### Curriculum, Grades 1-9:

- WordPerfect 5.1 files of the English and French documents have been distributed to all boards of education through the Ontario Educational Software Service (OESS).

Word searches can be carried out through WordPerfect, and sections of the document can be copied into other WordPerfect documents.

- A ToolBook version of the English document has been successfully tested over the summer. It is available as a downloadable file on a CD-ROM called "ONeducation". It is expected that the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education will have sent this to all school boards and faculties of education in early December. It runs under Windows 3.1 and requires at least a 386 computer with 4 megabytes of RAM, a mouse, and a VGA colour monitor. The French version is completed, but currently runs under the English ToolBook program. The French program is on order.

The ToolBook version offers special search capabilities on screen and provides for the printing of specialized reports by grade level, word search, or cross-curricular outcome. It has a point-and-click interface that is operated with a mouse and is easy to use.

- FileMaker Pro, fully databased versions of the English and French documents, are completed for Macintosh and Windows platforms. These versions are currently being tested. FileMaker was recently licensed for use in Ontario schools. It is expected that it will be distributed through an OESS release in early 1994.

FileMaker Pro can be used to print specialized reports by grade level, word search, or

cross-curricular outcome. Additional record fields can be created for board or school purposes.

All these versions are expected to be available as files for downloading over the Electronic Village network, which is being used by the Ontario Teachers' Federation for the project called "Creating a Culture of Change".

### Reading Recovery

Reading Recovery is an early short-term intervention program for students having difficulty with reading in Grade 1. Its goal is to enable the students initially "at risk" to make accelerated progress and to become competent, confident, independent readers in approximately twelve to twenty weeks of daily, individual, thirty-minute lessons. The program includes a balance of strategies chosen to meet the diagnosed needs and progress of the individual child.

Reading Recovery was developed by Dr. Marie Clay and has been successfully implemented in New Zealand. The program was adopted by the Board of Education for the City of Scarborough in 1988, and has been used there with a high degree of success and growing enthusiasm. There is now a great deal of interest in it in many school boards in Ontario and in other provinces.

On October 27, 1993, the Canadian Institute of Reading Recovery was officially opened by the Minister of Education and Training at Scarborough College, University of Toronto.

### Reporting to Parents

The ministry is at present examining a large selection of report cards developed by Ontario school boards and schools. While maintaining the integrity of the policy stipulated for report cards

in the *Ontario Student Record (OSR) Guideline, 1989* (section 3.2.2), these report cards are providing more information on student achievement than before.

Changes to reporting procedures are needed to reflect outcomes-based curriculum and an integrated approach to curriculum. Innovative assessment and evaluation practices that match the teaching strategies of an integrated approach are thus encouraged. Teachers who are using a variety of assessment tools to evaluate students' learning are finding new ways of providing additional information beyond grades, marks, and anecdotal reports to describe student progress.

In the next few months the ministry will contact some school boards about their work on effective reporting procedures. Practice should continue to inform policy directions.

### Federation of Women Teachers' Associations of Ontario (FWTAO)

FWTAO has been planning the following events related to *The Common Curriculum, Grades 1-9*:

- A project scheduled for February with TVOntario will focus on ways of developing an integrated unit of study for Grades 7 and 8. Sessions will be held in several locations, and it is expected that about seven hundred people will attend. Discussions will focus on how to begin development of an integrated unit and how to make appropriate use of technology. The proceedings will be recorded for later broadcast by TVOntario.
- Eight regional conferences on *The Common Curriculum, Grades 1-9*, which will make use of the expertise in each region, will focus on practical classroom matters.